



March 1, 2023

The Honorable Sam Graves  
Chairman  
House Committee on Transportation  
and Infrastructure  
U.S. House of Representatives  
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Rick Larsen  
Ranking Member  
House Committee on Transportation  
and Infrastructure  
U.S. House of Representatives  
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Maria Cantwell  
Chair  
Senate Committee on Commerce, Science  
and Transportation  
U.S. Senate  
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Ted Cruz  
Ranking Member  
Senate Committee on Commerce,  
Science, and Transportation  
U.S. Senate  
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Chairman Graves, Ranking Member Larsen, Chair Cantwell, and Ranking Member Cruz:

We are the Rally for Air Service Coalition, a group formed to communicate the harms of the growing pilot shortage on our aviation system and local communities, and to urge meaningful policy solutions. Our membership includes airports, chambers of commerce, economic development organizations, educational institutions, and many others. As you know, Congress has sought to address growing workforce shortages, including the pilot shortage, including measures in the last two Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) Reauthorization laws. Unfortunately, the pilot shortage that began nearly a decade ago has grown to alarming proportions and has resulted in air service collapse in many parts of the country, with real and devastating impacts on our airports, communities, and way of life. Therefore, we write to share our serious concerns regarding the pilot shortage and to urge your committees to take further action to remedy the shortage and the cascade of harms it has imposed.

Today 324 airports, a shocking 76 percent of the countries' commercial airports, have substantially less air service than before the pandemic. This is overwhelmingly due to the pilot shortage and has occurred despite rising passenger demand, a return to pre-COVID pilot employment levels, and historic pilot pay raises. On average these airports have lost 30 percent of their flights with the smallest airports suffering the greatest impacts. However, the loss of flights and connectivity is also occurring at large and medium hub airports. Acting as the proverbial "canary in the coalmine", in just the last two years alone, 14 U.S. airports have lost all scheduled, commercial air service and 53 airports have lost over half of their flights. Air service losses make it more difficult for communities to attract investment, generate employment, and provide mobility and vital services to their citizens.

The stark reality is that demand for pilots is far outpacing the available supply, which further exacerbates the existing shortage. Despite the return to pre-COVID demand for air travel and approximately 9,491 new pilots certificated in the last year, nearly 4,000 pilot qualifications were disrupted during Covid and more than 415 regional aircraft are currently parked and no longer in service. There are no signs that the pilot shortage and its devastating impact on air service will abate anytime soon. The pilot population is aging, and there are 70 percent more pilots aged 43-64 than there are pilots aged 21-42. Nearly half of today's qualified pilot workforce faces mandatory retirement within 15 years, and 2,225 pilots face mandatory retirement this year; more than 10 percent of the workforce must retire within 5 years. Even as the retirement crisis grows, prospective pilots face financial and access barriers to career training, which are insurmountable for individuals and families without wealth or the means to obtain private loans. For example, student loans do not cover the cost of flight education, and there are no financial supports available to pilots building flight time they are required to obtain before airlines may hire them. Such barriers not only constrain supply, they also hinder efforts to improve diversity among pilot ranks.

We respectfully urge your committees to take decisive actions to help alleviate the pilot shortage and to preserve and restore air service to communities across the country. Our communities are bearing the brunt of the pilot shortage crisis and we urge you to act now. Because solutions will take time to bear fruit, we urge policy efforts that focus on both long-term solutions and near-term supports. We need to work together to develop and put in place fact-based, safety-first solutions to provide greater pilot career access, create more high-quality pilots, and build upon the United States' incredible air safety record. Our communities and citizens are counting on Congress to take the lead to address this vital issue and we stand ready to assist you in your efforts. Thank you in advance for your consideration of our request.

Sincerely,



Abraham Lincoln Capital Airport



Alexandria International Airport



Baton Rouge Metropolitan Airport



Boise Metro Chamber



Cedar Rapids Metro Economic Alliance



Central Wisconsin Airport



Central Wyoming Regional Airport



City of Riverton, Wyoming



Dayton Area Chamber of Commerce



INTERNATIONAL AIRPORT  
Dayton International Airport



Duluth International Airport



Eastern Iowa Airport



FlightSafety International



Fremont Air Service Team



Golden Triangle Regional Airport



Greater Pueblo Chamber of Commerce



Huntington Tri-State Airport



Iowa City Business Area Partnership



Kalamazoo | Battle Creek International Airport



Keweenaw Economic Development Alliance



La Crosse Regional Airport



Lafayette Regional Airport



Lake Charles Regional Airport



Louisiana Airports Managers and Associates



MHIRJ



Monroe Regional Airport



Montana Essential Air Service Task Force



National Association of State Aviation Officials



New York Aviation Management Association



Northeast Wyoming Regional Airport



Raise the Pilot Age



Regional Air Cargo Carriers Association



Regional Airline Association



Rock Springs Chamber/Rock Springs Enterprise Coalition



Salisbury Regional Airport



Santa Maria Valley Chamber



Sidney-Richland Regional Airport



Sioux Gateway Airport



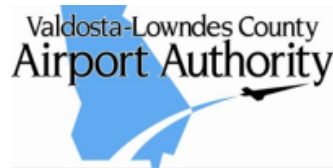
Southwest Wyoming Regional Airport



The Greater Springfield Chamber



The Longview Chamber



Valdosta-Lowndes County Airport Authority



Visit Pueblo



Washington Chamber of Commerce



Williamsport Regional Airport



Williamsport/Lycoming Chamber of Commerce



WYOMING AIRPORTS COALITION™  
Wyoming Airports Coalition



Wyoming Business Alliance



Wyoming Economic Development Association



Wyoming State Chamber of Commerce



Yellowstone Regional Airport

CC:

**Members of the House Committee on Transportation and Infrastructure**

**Members of the Senate Committee on Commerce, Science, and Transportation**